

EDITORIALS

Our Voice: It's not raining hard enough to dip into state reserves

BY THE HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

JANUARY 07, 2018 12:09 PM, UPDATED JANUARY 07, 2018 08:09 PM



Gov. Jay Inslee has suggested using \$950 million from the state's \$2.3 billion emergency reserves to help make a one-time infusion to education. TED S. WARREN AP

The state's rainy day fund is supposed to grow when times are good so there is money available when times are tough.

A simple enough plan to understand, yet apparently difficult for some lawmakers to follow.

Gov. Jay Inslee's budget includes taking money from the state's emergency reserves to help pay for teacher salaries in the 2018-19 school year, but we think this would be a mistake.

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The legislative session begins Monday, and we advise the Legislature to find some other way to meet its obligation to public education without “borrowing” from reserves.

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State Treasurer Duane Davidson [met with the Herald editorial board last month](#) when he returned home for the holidays to discuss his first year on the job. Among other things, he talked about his concern over the governor’s idea to tap into the rainy day account.

Davidson was Benton County treasurer for 13 years when he won the 2016 election for the state treasurer’s job. We’ve always known him to be a solid, reliable manager of the people’s money, and we think his opinion on this issue should carry the most weight.

If he says raiding the rainy day fund is a bad idea, lawmakers should listen.

The economy is expanding, Davidson said, so now is the time to be adding to the emergency reserves — not subtracting from them.

The Legislature struggled for years to find a way to meet the requirements of the state Supreme Court’s McCleary decision, which determined that the state has been failing its paramount duty to fully fund K-12 education.

The legislative fix hammered out last summer shifts reliance on local school levies to the state. Then the court had to approve the solution, which it did — to a point.

The court did not take issue with the proposed financing plan, but rather, with the timing of its implementation. Lawmakers had wanted to wait until the fall of 2019 to fully fund teacher salaries, even though it was supposed to be this school year.

The Supreme Court said in November that the state has to meet the fall deadline — no more delays. That’s why the governor and other lawmakers are looking for a one-time boost to the budget.

Inslee has suggested using \$950 million from the \$2.3 billion reserve fund to help make the one-time infusion.

He also has proposed eventually replenishing the rainy day account with money generated by a new carbon tax he is supporting.

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But that particular tax idea has yet to be vetted and approved. It also has met political resistance in the past, so there is no certainty the rainy day fund could be restored once lawmakers raid it.

Inslee's plan is just too risky.

Davidson warned that the economic growth the state has been experiencing the past several years will not last — it never does. A downturn is inevitable, he said.

And when that happens, having enough money in reserves will be critical to keep state services going.

Forced by the Supreme Court to try and fully fund teacher salaries this fall instead of next year — as was originally hoped — some lawmakers would say the rain is here.

Davis and our [Tri-City legislators](#), however, believe the need to boost the school budget does not constitute a downpour.

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BY THE TRI-CITY HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

AUGUST 31, 2019, 10:01 AM, UPDATED SEPTEMBER 10, 2019, 10:01 PM

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Executive Professor, Connecticut College, Mattis' views do not necessarily reflect those of the Tri-City Herald.



Former Defense Secretary James Mattis' new book says divisiveness and tribalism are the greatest threats to America. Canceled state wildlife hearings over wolves because of threats show the problem.

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